

**Worksheet**  
**Documentation of Land Use Plan Conformance and NEPA Adequacy (DNA)**  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
Bureau of Land Management (BLM)

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**Note:** This worksheet is to be completed consistent with the policies stated in the Instruction Memorandum entitled “Documentation of Land Use Plan Conformance and National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) Adequacy” transmitting this worksheet and the “Guidelines for Using the DNA Worksheet” located at the end of the worksheet. (Note: The signed CONCLUSION at the end of this worksheet is part of an interim step in the BLM’s internal analysis process and does not constitute an appealable decision.)

**A. BLM Office:** Baker Resource Area

**Proposed Action Title/Type:** Phase 1 Juniper Reproduction Maintenance Cut

**Location of Proposed Action:** T11S R42E Sections 14, 15, 22, & 23

**Description of the Proposed Action:** The Proposed Action is to retreat 1,100 acres of juniper within the vicinity of Woods Gulch which is approximately four air miles west of the town of Durkee Oregon. This area was originally treated in 2003 with the intention to improve a mountain big sagebrush stand that was threatened by juniper encroachment. The result of this project eliminated the mature juniper trees. However, these treatments did not adequately reduce the seedbed and currently there is a high density of small diameter (1-4 inch diameter at breast height) juniper trees growing within the previously treated area. The original treatment was analyzed using a categorical exclusion (CX) specific to hazardous fuels and follow-up juniper treatments were not analyzed. Since the time of the original treatments the CX authority for hazardous fuels reduction was revoked therefore the BLM is required to complete a higher level NEPA document. The higher level NEPA document the BLM will use is a Determination of NEPA Adequacy which will tier to the Baker Habitat Fuels Reduction EA as the existing NEPA document.

The BLM proposes to use chainsaws to cut the juniper trees. All down trees would be left in place and prescribed burning would not be conducted following cutting, with the exception of two one half acre units of mature trees that would be cut, piled, and burned. Project implementation would occur in late winter or early spring of 2015. Bureau of Land Management personnel would be utilized during all phases of project implementation, so no contractors will be involved at this time.

## **B. Conformance with the Land Use Plan (LUP) and Consistency with Related Subordinate Implementation Plans**

**LUP Name:** Baker Resource Management Plan, July 1989

- Wildlife and Fisheries Habitat Management Direction (RMP, p. 18): Habitat Management Plans (HMP) will be developed for economically important wildlife species including mule deer, antelope, bighorn sheep, and grouse. Primary emphasis of the HMP will be to ensure availability of palatable shrubs and thermal cover for deer on crucial winter ranges in Baker County.
- Reduce conifer (especially western juniper) encroachment into key wildlife habitat dominated by mountain mahogany, aspen, bitterbrush or sagebrush by 90 percent while maintaining or enhancing sagebrush and mountain shrub habitat values.
- Increase forage available to big game and other wildlife on public and state owned lands in the Project Area while retaining adequate cover.

## **C. Identify the applicable National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) document(s) and other related documents that cover the proposed action.**

- Baker Resource Management Plan Final Environmental Impact Statement (1989)
- Baker Habitat Restoration and Fuel Reduction Project Environmental Assessment No. DOI-BLM-OR-V050-2013-014
- Vale Fire Management Plan
- Protocol for Managing Cultural Resources on Lands Managed by the Bureau of Land Management in Oregon (August 1998)
- BLM Cultural Resource Management Manuals (8100 Manual Series)

## **D. NEPA Adequacy Criteria**

**1. Is the new proposed action a feature of, or essentially similar to, an alternative analyzed in the existing NEPA document(s)? Is the project within the same analysis area, or if the project location is different, are the geographic and resource conditions sufficiently similar to those analyzed in the existing NEPA document(s)? If there are differences, can you explain why they are not substantial?**

Alternative 3 The Woods Gulch Juniper Reduction Project proposed action is similar to the Baker Habitat Fuel Reduction Project proposed action with the only differences being the Baker Habitat Fuel

Reduction Projects allows for prescribed fire to treat the downed trees whereas the Woods Gulch Fuels Reduction Project will not utilize prescribed burning. The difference is not substantial because prescribed fire was used in Baker Habitat Fuels Reduction Project to 1) reduce wildfire hazards and 2) to reduce the seedbed by burning the seeds. However these issues are not applicable for the Woods Gulch Fuels Reduction Project since 1) the density of trees are not high enough to cause hazardous fuels conditions and 2) the trees are not mature enough to produce seeds therefore fire is not needed to reduce the seedbed.

The Woods Gulch Juniper Reduction Project is not located in the same analysis area as the Baker Habitat Juniper Reduction Project (EA No. DOI-BLM OR-V050-2013-14). However the geographic and resource conditions are the same for the two projects. Specifically, The Woods Gulch Juniper Reduction Project is located within the Burnt River watershed which is major part of the Baker Habitat Juniper Reduction Project. Also, GIS analysis shows that both project areas have the same soil types, vegetation communities, ecological site and wildlife habitats. Additionally cultural and botanical surveys have been completed within the Woods Gulch Juniper Reduction project area and the result of these surveys found no cultural artifacts, threatened, endangered or sensitive plants.

**2. Is the range of alternatives analyzed in the existing NEPA document(s) appropriate with respect to the current proposed action, given current environmental concerns, interests, resource values, and circumstances?**

Yes. The existing document analyzed three alternatives which included 1) No Action 2) treatment of juniper and biomass removal and 3) treatment of juniper and no biomass removal. These Alternatives utilized the best available science and this science did not support an additional alternative. The BLM conducted a literature search to determine if new scientific views changed since the completion of the Baker Habitat Fuel Reduction Project. The BLM determined that the scientific views on the management of juniper did not change during this time period. Therefore the documents used to construct the Alternatives in the Baker Habitat Fuel Reduction project are still considered the best available science.

Since the publication of the Baker Habitat Fuel Reduction Project no new environmental concerns, interest, resources values or circumstances have been identified by field monitoring, scientific literature or from the public.

**3. Is the existing analysis valid in light of any new information or circumstances (such as, rangeland health standard assessment, recent endangered species listings, and updated lists of BLM-sensitive species)? Can you reasonably conclude that new information and new circumstances would not substantially change the analysis of the new proposed action?**

Yes the existing analysis is valid. No changes in rangeland health, recent endangered species listings or updated BLM-sensitive species have occurred within the project boundary. Therefore, since there is no new information the BLM determined that the analysis of the new proposed action would not change from what is identified in the Baker Habitat Fuels Reduction Project.

**4. Are the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects that would result from implementation of the new proposed action similar (both quantitatively and qualitatively) to those analyzed in the existing NEPA document?**

Yes. The impacts of removing juniper from a native sagebrush community has been well documented in scientific literature. These studies show that removing juniper will have predictable impacts to sagebrush communities that occur within both project areas. These same studies were used to determine the impact of the alternatives described in the Baker Habitat Fuel Reduction Project. Therefore, the BLM believes that the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects that would result from implementation of the new proposed action are similar (both quantitatively and qualitatively) to those analyzed in the existing NEPA document?

**5. Are the public involvement and interagency review associated with existing NEPA document(s) adequately for the current proposed action?**

Yes. The public involvement plan for the existing NEPA analysis included all affected livestock grazing permittees, adjacent landowners, and the following:

**E. Persons/Agencies /BLM Staff Consulted**

Jason Simmons, BLM ID-Team Lead  
Scott English, BLM Fuels Management Technician  
Don Rotell, BLM Archeologist  
Mellissa Yzquierdo, BLM Wildlife Biologist  
Mitch Thomas, BLM Range Management Specialist  
Denine Schmitz, BLM Fisheries/Riparian Technician  
John Quintela, BLM Fish Biologist  
Erin McConnell, BLM Weed Specialist  
Roger Ferriel, BLM Botanist

**Note: Refer to the EA/EIS for a complete list of the team members participating in the preparation of the original environmental analysis or planning documents.**



**Conclusion**

*(If you found that one or more of these criteria are not met, you will not be able to check this box.)*

Based on the review documented above, I conclude that this proposal conforms to the applicable LUP and that the NEPA documentation fully covers the Proposed Action and constitute BLM's compliance with the requirements of the NEPA.

Note: If one or more of the criteria are not met, a conclusion of conformance and/or NEPA adequacy cannot be made and this box cannot be checked.

 \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Project Lead: 1/22/15  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of NEPA Coordinator: Date  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Responsible Official: 1/29/2015  
Date

**Note:** The signed Conclusion on this Worksheet is part of an interim step in the BLM's internal decision process and does not constitute an appealable decision. However, the lease, permit, or other authorization based on this DNA is subject to protest or appeal under 43 CFR Part 4 and the program-specific regulations.

## **DECISION RECORD for Woods Gulch Juniper Reproduction Control Project**

### **Background**

The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) previously prepared an environmental assessment (EA No. DOI-BLM-OR-V050-2013-014, Baker Habitat Restoration and Fuel Reduction Project) which contained analysis of the effects of juniper removal on 47,500 acres within the Baker Resource Area. The objectives of the juniper cut were to return juniper stands within the project area to a density that better resembled pre- European settlement and reduce hazardous fuels at the same time. This EA resulted in a Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI). As is the case with the project in the Baker Habitat EA, the goal of the project in this Determination of NEPA Adequacy (DNA) is to maintain 1,100 of sagebrush-steppe that had phase 2 juniper cut between the years of 2005 to 2008. The original cut was analyzed in Categorical Exclusion # OR-030-05-07 and signed on May 06, 2005. In 2005 this action and other similar actions were categorically excluded in accordance with 561 DM2, Appendix 1, 1.12. In recent years the authority to categorically exclude actions like this was revoked. This 1,100 acres of juniper reproduction is immediately adjacent to a 20,000 acre unit of juniper analyzed in the Baker Habitat EA. It is also bordered on the southeast by 100 acres of private land on which juniper was cut in 2013. The southeast landowner has recently inquired what the BLM intended on doing about juniper reproduction adjacent to his land.

### **Decision**

It is my decision to authorize the activities as described in the Woods Gulch Juniper Reproduction Control Project DNA (DOI-BLM-OR-V050-2014-086-DNA). The BLM proposes to use chainsaws and hand tools to cut small diameter juniper trees on 1,100 acres. On 1,099 acres the down trees would be left in place and prescribed burning would not be conducted following cutting due to the small size of the trees. Two one half acre units of mature trees located in the NW1/4 of section 15 would be cut, hand piled, and burned. Project implementation would occur in the late winter and or early spring of 2015.

The design features and environmental consequences from this type of project were fully analyzed in the Baker Habitat environmental assessment. The Woods Gulch site is located within the Durkee Allotment which is 4 miles west of the town of Durkee, OR. The legal description is: T. 11 S., R. 42 E., Sections 23, 22, 15, & 14 (see attached map).

The EA contained project design elements designed to avoid or minimize impacts on resources and are included as part of the Proposed Action. These and additional descriptions of the Proposed Action are hereby incorporated by reference.

### **Conformance and Compliance**

The Proposed Action has been reviewed and found to be in conformance with the Baker Resource Management Plan (RMP) (1989) and federal fire management policy, as described in the National Fire Plan (2000), A Collaborative Approach for Reducing Wildland Fire Risks to Communities and the Environment: Ten-Year Comprehensive Strategy (2001), and the local Baker County Community Wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP) (2012).

The Proposed Action has been found to be in conformance with Section 7(a)1 of the Endangered Species Act. It is in compliance with Federal laws that mandate the management of public land resources (Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976). It is in compliance with the various Federal laws, regulations, and Executive Orders dealing with cultural resources. In addition, the proposed action is in conformance with State, local, and Tribal land use plans, laws, and regulations.

The decision does not result in any undue or unnecessary environmental degradation. Resource values are protected through implementation of project design elements.

### **Public Involvement**

The general public was informed of the EA and FONSI through a letter (July 2013) to those on the Field Office's mailing list, which included adjacent landowners and the others who had requested them. The BLM posted a Legal Notice in The Baker City Herald newspaper in 2013 requesting comments for scoping. The BLM received one written comment from Oregon Wild.

### **Decision Rationale**

Field Office staff have reviewed the Proposed Action. I have determined that this project meets the criteria for a Determination of NEPA Adequacy (DNA) and that no additional environmental analysis is required. The supporting analysis and NEPA Documentation fully covers the proposed action and constitutes BLM's compliance with the requirements of NEPA.

This decision will allow a maintenance cut of encroaching juniper trees that were cut eight years ago; so that native grasses and shrubs can compete and continue to reestablish. These encroaching juniper trees are small diameter trees that average 4 to 8 feet in height and are 1 to 4 inches diameter at breast height. If a maintenance cut is not allowed following a main cut, juniper will once again dominate the landscape in this area and degrade native grass and shrub species vegetation, which reduces available vegetation for wildlife. This loss of shrubs and grasses negatively affects a wide variety of wildlife species and overall biological diversity, and is especially detrimental to deer, elk, bighorn sheep and other species which consume grasses and shrubs (Miller *et. al.*, 1995, Bunting *et. al.*, 1987, Miller *et. al.*, 2005). The Woods Gulch area is adjacent to the Baker Habitat Juniper Reduction Project (EA No. DOI-BLM\_OR-V050-2013-14). However the geographic and resource conditions are the same for the two projects. Specifically, The Woods Gulch Juniper Reduction Project is located within the Burnt River Watershed which is the same watershed as the Baker Habitat Juniper Reduction Project. Also, GIS analysis shows that both project areas have the same soil types, vegetation communities, ecological site and wildlife habitats. Additionally some cultural (300 acres surveyed) and all botanical surveys have been completed within the Woods Gulch Juniper Reproduction Control project area and the result of these surveys found no cultural artifacts or threatened, endangered or sensitive plants.

I am choosing to implement the Woods Gulch Juniper Reproduction Control Project for the following reasons:

- Implementation of the Proposed Alternative meets the Purpose and Need described in the Baker Habitat Restoration and Fuel Reduction Project Environmental Assessment.
- It is consistent with the Proposed Action has been reviewed and found to be in conformance with the Baker Resource Management Plan (RMP) (1989) for the Vale District of the Bureau of Land Management.
- It complies with other major applicable laws, regulations and Bureau policies.

### **Administrative Remedies**

This decision may be appealed to the Interior Board of Land Appeals (IBLA), Office of the Secretary, in accordance with regulations contained in 43 CFR Part 4. If an appeal is taken, your notice of appeal must be filed with the Baker Field Office, Vale District BLM, PO Box 947, Baker City, OR, 97814. The appellant has the burden of showing that the decision being appealed is in error.

For further information, contact:

**Decision issued by:**



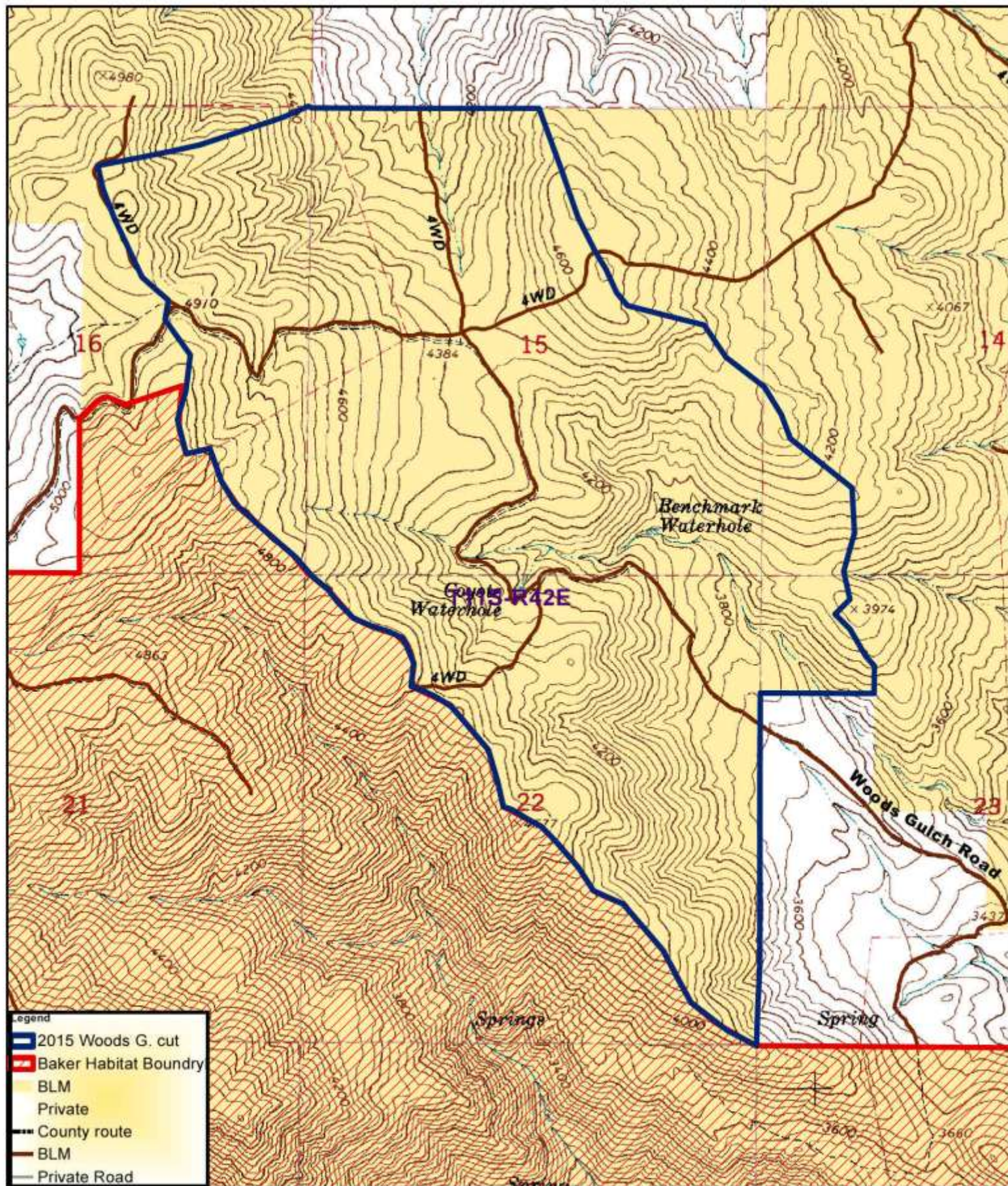
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Lori Wood, Baker Resource Area Field Manager

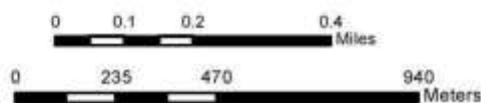


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January, 22 2015



## Woods Gulch DNA Juniper Lop and Scatter



1:17,500



U.S. Department of Interior  
Bureau of Land Management  
Vale District  
Spring 2015

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